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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: THE THREAT TO PEACE IN A FORGOTTEN LAND:
INSECURITY IN THE NUBA MOUNTAINS

REF: A. KHARTOUM 1435
[B](#). KHARTOUM 1427
[C](#). KHARTOUM 1309

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) A recent visit to the Nuba Mountains revealed growing unease in the area as a result of the proliferation of armed groups. Consisting of the SAF, the Popular Defense Force (PDF), the Central Reserve Police (better known as the janjaweed), SPLA splinter groups led by break-away SPLA fighters, and armed Arab tribes such as the Hawazma and the Riziegat, the one thing that local residents allege the groups have in common is support and armament from the NCP, whether tacit or overt, official or underground. The uncertainty of the SPLA's commitment to remain south of the January 1, 1956 border at Lake Abiad and the over 15,000 SPLA troops who are unaccounted for in the Nuba Mountains region adds to the potentially explosive security situation. Poloff was not able to confirm Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) claims of using the state as a staging ground for attacks on Khartoum. End Summary.

NCP'S MILITARY BACKBONE GROWS IN STRENGTH

[1](#)2. (C) UNMIS military observers in Southern Kordofan state report that SAF forces have been growing around the area of Kharasana, just northwest, but outside of the interim boundaries of Abyei (ref B). While UNMIS estimates the SAF troop levels noticeably began increasing in April, the SAF has not allowed UNMIS access to the area in order to verify the number of its troops in and around Kharasana.

[1](#)3. (C) UNMIS also reports that the NCP's Popular Defense Force (PDF) is well-armed and increasing in strength in Southern Kordofan. Traditional leaders from Kadugli County told poloff that the GoS should take the lead in integrating the PDF into the SAF. They claimed that the NCP has been providing heavier weapons and more vehicles to the PDF in the area recently.

[1](#)4. C) Traditional leaders also pointed to the influx of a troubling new group in the area that they called the Police Reserve Force (also referred to as the Central Reserve Police and often conflated with armed Arab tribal militias such as the janjaweed of Darfur). They described this group as "the same body that is fighting the people of Darfur," and said

that until recently, the group never existed in the state of Southern Kordofan. Members of the SPLM Youth League also reported the presence of the Central Reserve Police force in Southern Kordofan. "They've been brought over from Darfur, are using heavy weapons, have been trained as soldiers, and are logistically supported by the SAF."

POTENTIAL SPLA SPLINTER GROUPS

15. (C) Southern Kordofan Minister of Finance Ahmed Abdalla Al Rahman Saeed (SPLM) claimed to poloff on 15 September that at least two armed SPLA splinter groups also exist and are gaining strength in the Nuba Mountains area. The first of these groups is led by former SPLA General in the Nuba Mountains Telephon Kuku, now resident in Khartoum. The second is led by Hawazma Arabs and former PDF and SPLA fighter Al Bulola Hamed Abdul Bagi. According to Minister Saeed, Bulola is actively recruiting followers among Arab tribes in the Nuba Mountains (particularly the Hawazma,) and Telephon is recruiting former SPLA Nuba fighters. Both of these groups, claimed Saeed, are NCP-driven spoilers. They have been propped up by the NCP in order to create instability and discredit SPLM leadership, particularly with regard to the lack of CPA implementation in Southern Kordofan. The NCP is interested in seeing the Nuba Mountains region become an Arab stronghold, said Saeed.

16. (C) Poloffs met with alleged SPLA break away leader Telephone Kuku in Khartoum on 9 September. Kuku, who has been residing in Khartoum for the last two years, claims that he represents the cause of thousands of Nuba SPLA fighters

KHARTOUM 00001455 002 OF 004

who have are "fed up with the CPA" and seek a "political solution" for the Nuba people. Born and raised just south of the town of Kadugli, Kuku claims to have been one of the "first sons" of the SPLA in the Nuba region and a founder of the SPLM movement in the Nuba Mountains. Kuku became dissatisfied with the SPLA as early as the late 1980s, when he "discovered" that senior SPLM officials in Juba were talking about separation from northern Sudan rather than unity. Talk of separation created fear in Nuban SPLA commanders, explained Kuku, as they questioned what would become of the Nuba Mountains area in the event of a possible secession of southern Sudan. While Kuku was arrested by the SPLA and imprisoned in Juba in 1993 for mutiny (Kuku mentioned he was arrested; however he did not mention his charge was mutiny), he was released in 1998 and made the SPLA Chief of Logistics, where Kuku said he was able to spend considerable time with SPLA leaders such as John Garang, Riek Machar, and Salva Kiir Mayardit. (Bio Note: Author Julie Flint writes in her August 2008 Small Arms Survey report on the Nuba Mountains that Kuku was arrested for mutiny by the SPLA's Joseph Kuwa in 1993 after handing Buram to the SAF without a fight. End note.)

17. (C) According to Kuku, the CPA provides "weak benefits" to the Nuba people. "What we got out of the CPA is not equivalent to the amount of blood spilled by Nuba soldiers in the North/South struggle." Kuku explained that 2 percent of oil revenue is a meager amount to be given to a state with such vast oil resources. Furthermore, he explained that it is unjust for SPLA troops to have to deploy south of the January 1, 1956 border when their homes are in the North (the Nuba Mountains). "We never fought for the South," said Kuku, "we only fought for the Nuba Mountains." Kuku claimed that he and other Nuban SPLA fighters have been used by the SPLM in order to further its agenda; both during the war and now during the run-up to the 2011 referendum. "The CPA only protects the South." What will be the status of the Nuba if the South secedes? Kuku claimed that he has spoken with SPLM Chairman Salva Kiir Mayardit on a number of occasions about the uncertainty of the Nuba region post-2011. According to Kuku, Kiir has done little to address Nuban concerns about the region's uncertain future and current lack

of peace dividends. (Note: Kuku's frustration with the CPA echoes the sentiments of many Nuban SPLM supporters in the Nuba Mountains as well as SPLM leaders in the Southern Kordofan Government, including the erratic Deputy Governor of the State Daniel Kodi. End note.)

¶8. (C) Kuku claimed that up to a third of those SPLA fighters living in the Nuba Mountains area will refuse integration with the federal and state administration and return home with their guns. Kuku's solution to the Nubans' discontent is to review the CPA Protocol on Southern Kordofan and the Blue Nile and revise it. "Around 7000 Nuban soldiers died in the North/South struggle, yet there is not one Nuban in the Republican Palace nor the GoSS Council of Ministers," said Kuku. If the Nuba, frustrated with the current lack of dividends, brought about by the CPA do not reap any result from our effort to amend the CPA, they will fight, said Kuku. Currently, Kuku spends his time in Khartoum writing about the disparity of the Nuba and participating in Nuba rallies. "I want to send a message to the NCP and the SPLM," said Kuku. "If they don't pay attention to what we are saying, we will take arms," he claimed.

ARMING OF ARAB TRIBES

¶9. (C) SPLM State Secretary Arnu Ngutulu Lodi claimed some Arab nomadic tribes have been transformed into NCP-backed militias - a familiar pattern of behavior by Khartoum going back decades. The militias are getting food, weapons, and military support from Khartoum, claimed Lodi. They are often involved in looting and abductions, he said. "They are the ones causing the real insecurity in the area." By arming Arab tribes, the NCP is trying to foment discontent between the Nuba and the Misseriya, claimed Lodi, and it is "incumbent upon us (the leaders of the state) to keep the peace we have already achieved." We don't want to trigger any more war and we are keen to keep the peace for the sake of our children, unless we are compelled to defend ourselves, said Lodi. "And this we will do." Southern Kordofan Minister of Finance Ahmed Saeed claimed that the NCP is inciting ethnic conflict. Groups are "being pushed" into conflict.

KHARTOUM 00001455 003 OF 004

Continued conflict like this will spoil the elections, predicted Saeed. The elections in Southern Kordofan are likely to be "bloody and violent" given the NCP's incitement of ethnically-based conflict in the region.

¶10. (C) Civil society group members working in Southern Kordofan echoed the concern that political entities are arming Arab tribes. Giving arms to such groups generally leads to human rights violations, they said. Though they did not point the blame at one party in particular, they were quick to assess that there is a general lack of political will on behalf of both the SPLM and the NCP to implement the CPA in the Nuba Mountains. "There is little understanding between the NCP and the SPLM" in Southern Kordofan, and as a result of the slow and half-hearted CPA implementation in the state, there is little development and no social services. "If you go to the hospital in Kadugli," they said, "you will not find drugs or doctors." Furthermore, there is little understanding of the CPA across the state.

¶11. (C) On the night of 14 September, poloff met with traditional leaders from Kadugli county. The leaders explained that a great many things contribute to insecurity in Southern Kordofan, but highlighted the main causes as the lack of reconciliation between the Nuba and Arab tribes following the signing of the CPA, the proliferation of light weapons in the state as a result of political entities arming various groups, the lack of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) following the war, and land disputes between farmers and cattle owners. The leaders repeated what civil society had mentioned earlier: there is little understanding of the CPA and what it means to the citizens of

Southern Kordofan. Leaders said that the lack of clear border demarcation, the absence of a Land Commission to settle overlapping land disputes, and the increasing movement of Arab tribes into Southern Kordofan is causing confrontation. Instead of handling disputes in a traditional fashion, groups are resorting to conflict.

A JIU THAT IS NEITHER JOINT, NOR INTEGRATED

¶12. (C) As in most areas, the Southern Kordofan Joint Integrated Unit (JIU) is neither joint, nor integrated, as stated by Deputy Governor Daniel Kodi (SPLM) of Southern Kordofan (ref B) on 14 September. Southern Kordofan Minister of Finance Ahmed Saeed (SPLM) described the state 3000 SAF and 3000 SPLA soldiers that make up the JIU as "clearly separate in terms of doctrine, training command, and armament." Saeed said that there is so little in common between the SAF and the SPLA JIU troops that the troops are beginning to question whether they are really a JIU. "Resentment is building, and the situation could easily explode," said Saeed. The May outbreak of violence in Abyei is a "lesson to all of us" said Saeed. SPLM State Secretary Arnu Ngutulu Lodi said that while the JIU is supposed to monitor peace brought about by the CPA, the Southern Kordofan JIU has not been deployed in the eastern part of the state, nor along the border with Darfur. Members of civil society, traditional leaders, and even Deputy Speaker of the State Legislative Assembly Saddig Mansour (SPLM) complain that the JIU is ineffective. "Without security, we cannot proceed one inch," claimed Mansour.

¶13. (C) Poloff met with SPLA Brigadier General Jagot Mukwar, the SPLA-side JIU Commander in Southern Kordofan. The nervous Mukwar had very little to offer in terms of the work of the JIU in the Nuba Mountains. "The JIU, like many other CPA initiatives in Southern Kordofan, has not been implemented well." The force is neither joint, nor integrated and a program for the integration of the forces doesn't even exist. He explained that the GNU has not provided the JIU with any funds for training or equipment. "The PDF, the Central Reserve Police, and other armed groups including armed nomads, are a problem," he said and the JIU is not well-equipped to deal with them.

FROM ITS COMPOUND, UNMIS CLAIMS THERE IS LITTLE TO WORRY ABOUT

¶14. (C) While UNMIS milobs in Southern Kordofan do agree that SAF troop build-up near Kharasana, the heavy presence of the PDF, and the shaky commitment of the SPLA troops to remain South of the January 1, 1956 border at Lake Abiad are all

KHARTOUM 00001455 004 OF 004

issues of concern, they claim that little other insecurity plagues the state (ref B). While the oblivious milobs "received a report" that SPLA splinter groups exist and are recruiting armed former SPLA soldiers in the area, milobs claim they "deployed to verify" these reports, but found that the presence of such groups was only based on "rumors." Poloff questioned UNMIS about the presence of Darfur rebel groups and particularly JEM in the state of Southern Kordofan. Milobs stated that around the time of the May Omdurman JEM attack, the UN deployed joint military teams to verify JEM's existence in the area of Abu Junuk (northwest Southern Kordofan, about 40 kilometers from the border with Northern Kordofan) where the rebels claimed to be located. Milobs said they could not find any evidence of JEM in the area, and noted residents also denied claims of JEM's infiltration in the area. UNMIS had little to say about the arming of Arab tribes in the region.

¶16. (C) During the four-day visit, several groups, including civil society, traditional leaders, and SPLM complained about the lackluster support given by UNMIS military observers (Egyptian contingent) to monitor the security situation in

the state. Among the pro-SPLM Nuba, there is a strong feeling that Egyptian contingent is biased in favor of the NCP, a frequent complaint about Arab troops and governments throughout Sudan.

COMMENT

¶17. (C) Growing insecurity is currently the number one concern in Southern Kordofan. Just as it does in other areas of the state, the NCP is employing a strategy of "divide and conquer" through which ethnic groups, different tribes, and agriculturists and pastoralists are pitted against one another in order to foment instability and prevent an outright rebellion against central government forces. However, by arming elements of the local population, the NCP has raised the stakes and militarized disputes that could normally have been mediated between tribal leaders. Disagreements that used to be settled through peaceful traditional mechanisms are now determined by fatal skirmishes. The NCP also appears to be capitalizing on the frustration of the Nuba that the SPLM has short-changed them of a fair future and is unwilling to listen to their demands.

Furthermore, as Darfur and Abyei face greater international scrutiny, the increase in the number of the NCP's military forces, as well as the movement of the janjaweed into Southern Kordofan, increases the likelihood that Southern Kordofan could quickly become the next big conflict zone if the Nuba feel that the only way to secure their interests and protect their way of life is through armed conflict.

FERNANDEZ